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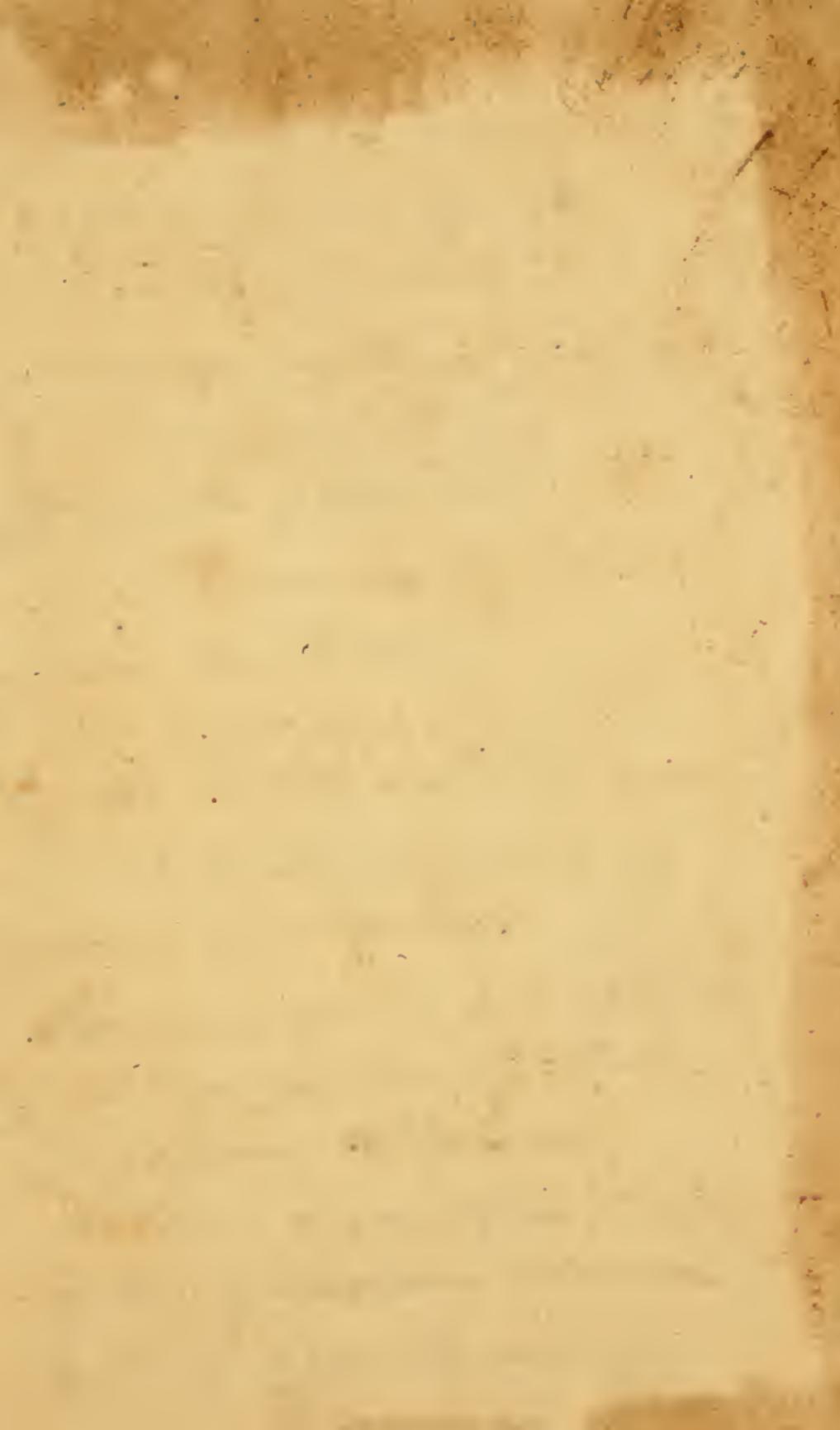
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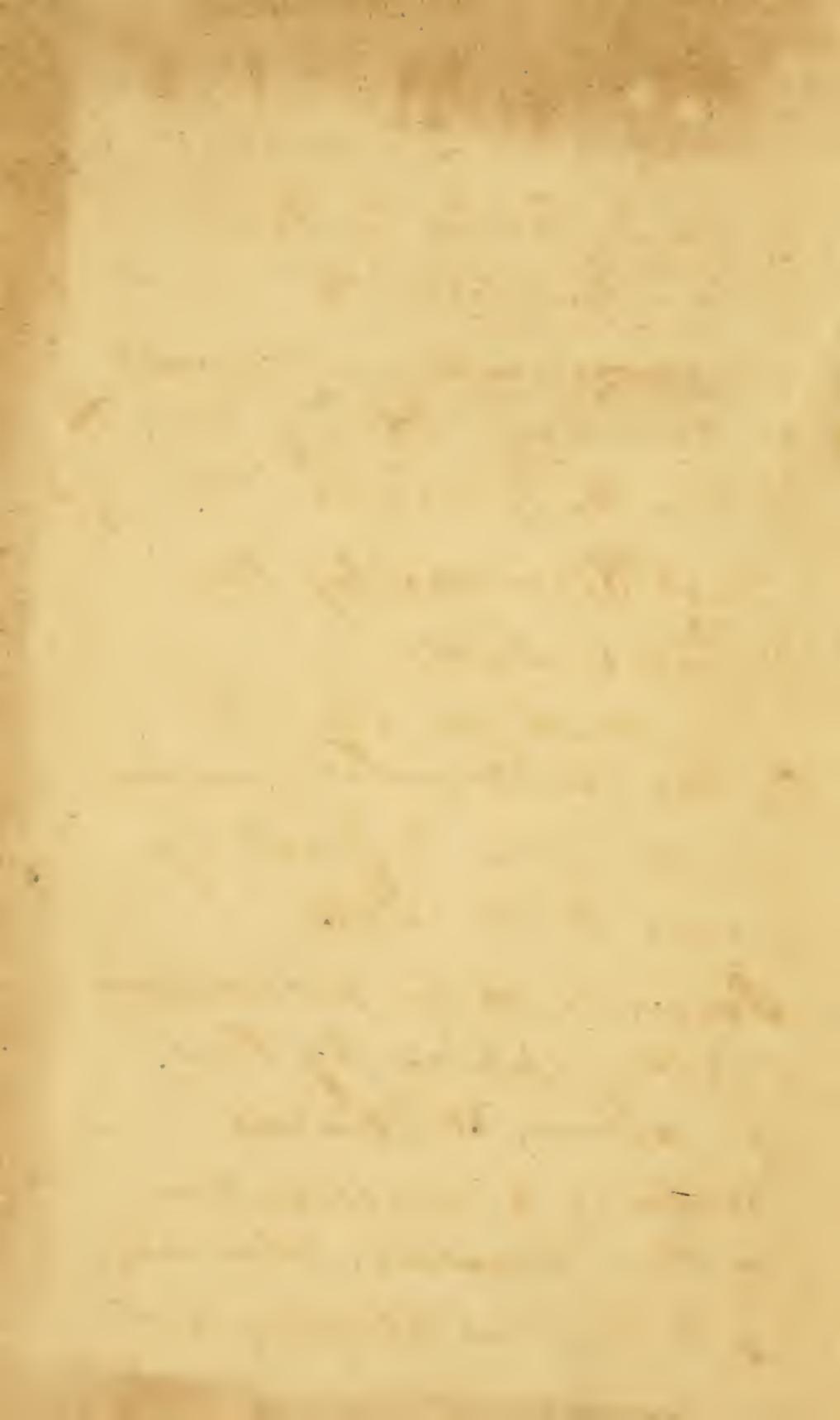
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THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND.

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED IN THE SOUTH PARISH

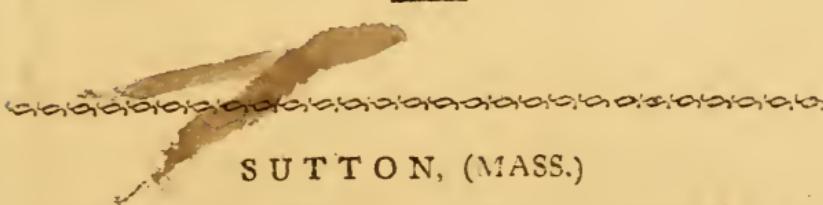
IN ANDOVER,

APRIL 5, 1810;

BEING THE

ANNUAL FAST IN MASSACHUSETTS.

BY JOHN HUBBARD CHURCH, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FELHAM, (N. H.)



SUTTON, (MASS.)

PRINTED AND SOLD BY SEWALL GOODRIDGE,

1810.

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A

S E R M O N.

PSALM, cv. 44, 45.

And gave them the lands of the heathen ; — that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.

FOR the glory of God all things were made ; and his glory should be the ultimate object of every intelligent being. By every expression of his goodness to men, their obligations to glorify his name are increased.

For the glory of his name, God called Abraham from his connexions and native land, and made with him an everlasting covenant, to be a God to him and to his seed in their generations, and to give them the land of Canaan for a possession. When the Israelites groaned in Egyptian bondage, he led them forth by the right hand of Moses, with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name. And he afterwards led them into Canaan, *and gave them the lands of the heathen ; that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.*

These words may be properly applied to the first settlement of New England. God gave our fathers possession of this land, that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws : or, in other words, that they might promote the pure religion of the gospel. That this was the design of our ancestors in settling in this land, is evident,

In the first place, from the circumstances which induced their removal.

The reformation of the sixteenth century was extended into England, and led the established Church to adopt a purer creed. The thirty-nine articles of their faith comprise the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. But still they adhered, in some things, to the ceremonies of the Romish Church. To these ceremonies many pious persons would not conform ; though willing to subscribe to all the articles of the true christian faith, and to the doctrine of the sacraments. But King James I. was determined to have one religion in ceremony, as well as in substance. Those who would not comply with his determination were called Nonconformists. They were also called Puritans, because as a Writer* of the established Church observed, they “ would have the Church thoroughly reformed : that is, purged from all those inventions, which have been brought into it, since the age of the Apostles, and reduced entirely to the scripture purity.”

* Dr. Fulk, quoted in Prince's N. E. Chronology, page 5.

The Puritans, in three counties in the north of England, were formed into two Churches. The Rev. Richard Clifton, a devout and successful preacher, was pastor of the Church, whose members began the settlement of New England. The Rev. John Robinson succeeded him. It was the great object of Mr. Robinson and his brethren to separate from the world. They were opposed to a separation from any of the Churches of Christ; holding communion with the reformed Churches in Scotland, France, and the Netherlands. They did not debar, from their communion, those of the Church of England, who gave evidence of real piety. It was the corruptions of that Church, which they opposed: and this opposition excited the bitterest resentment of King James and his Bishops.

Being persecuted for righteousness' sake, Mr. Robinson and his brethren contemplated a removal. Although it was painful to leave their estates, and bid farewell to their friends and the country which gave them birth, yet they could readily do all this for the quiet enjoyment of their religion. Accordingly they began, in 1607, to remove to Holland; where religious freedom was universally enjoyed. From Amsterdam, the first place of their residence, they soon removed to Leyden. There they lived in great peace and harmony, and were treated with respect. Their numbers increased, until the communicants amounted to three hundred. But difficulties and trials still awaited them. They had to endure such labor and hardship to obtain the means of support, that some returned to England. Many in England were discouraged, by these difficulties, from going to Holland. The youth were in great danger of being corrupted by the vices and temptations of Leyden. Some left their parents either for a military or seafaring life. And such were "the dissipated manners of the Hollanders, especially, their lax observance of the Lord's day," that our pious fathers could see little or no prospect, in that place, "of perpetuating a Church, which they believed to be constituted after the simple and pure model of the primitive Church of Christ."* At length they turned their thoughts to America. Here was presented, to their view, an extensive continent, inhabited by millions of their fellow men, under the dominion of the prince of darkness. How important to disseminate *the words of eternal life* among this wretched people! It was foreseen that a removal to this country must be attended with heavy trials and imminent dangers. But their zeal to propagate the gospel, and enjoy its blessings, inspired them with unshaken resolution and fortitude. So gloomy were their prospects, in a temporal view, that nothing but a regard to the gospel, to its precious truths and institutions, could dispose them to attempt a removal to this land. But with much prayer and pious consultation, they formed the noble design. This design, they executed; but not

* See Prince's *N. E. Chronology* and *Holmes' Annals*.

without much delay and trouble. Nearly three years were spent in making arrangements for their intended enterprise. New difficulties arose. But they persevered ; and in July 1620, the pious adventurers sailed from Holland to England. From thence, August 5, they sailed, in two vessels, for the new world. But they were twice obliged to return into port, by reason of the leakiness of one of the vessels. This was dismissed as unfit for the service. In the other vessel they set sail, the third time. September 6. But when half across the Atlantic, they might have been obliged to return, on account of the injury done to the ship by contrary winds and violent storms, had it not been for a large iron screw, which one of the passengers brought from Holland. With this they repaired the ship ; " and then committing themselves to the divine will." they proceeded on their voyage, and arrived in Cape Cod harbor, November 10. At Plymouth, they commenced the settlement of New England.

Uniformity in the observance of religious ceremonies was still enforced in England ; and Archbishop Laud adopted so rigorous measures against the Puritans, that numbers of them crossed the Atlantic, at different times, and began settlements in Salem, Charlestown, Boston, Dorchester, and other places, that they might promote the pure religion of the gospel. That this was the design of our ancestors, is evident,

In the second place, from their doctrinal belief, their piety, and their subsequent measures.

Mr. Robinson was a learned, orthodox, pious divine. He was a zealous advocate for the doctrines of grace. He and his brethren believed, " that the *inspired Scriptures only* contain *the true religion* ;—that every man has a right of judging for himself, of trying doctrines by them and of worshipping according to his apprehension of the meaning of them ;—that the doctrinal articles of the Church of England,* as also of the reformed Churches of Scotland, Ireland, France, the Palatinate, Geneva, Switzerland, and the United Provinces, are agreeable to the holy oracles :—that every particular Church of Christ is only to consist of such as appear to believe in and obey him ; that such—have a right to embody into a Church for their mutual edification ; that this embodying is by some certain contract or covenant :—that being embodied, they have a right of choosing all their officers : that the officers appointed by Christ, for this embodied Church, are in some respects of three sorts, in others but two, viz. Pastors or teaching elders ;—mere ruling elders, who are to help the pastor in overseeing and ruling ;—and deacons :—that these officers being chosen and ordained, have no lordly, arbitrary or imposing power, but can only rule and minister with the consent of the brethren ; who ought not in contempt to be called the laity, but to be treated as men and brethren in Christ, not as slaves or minors ;—that baptism is a seal

of the covenant of grace, and should be dispensed only to visible believers, with their unadult children; and this in primitive purity, as in the times of Christ and his Apostles, without the sign of the cross or any other invented ceremony; that the Lord's Supper should be received as it was at first, even in Christ's immediate presence, in the table posture."* For such principles, "this people suffered in England, fled to Holland, traversed the ocean, and sought a dangerous retreat in these remote and savage deserts of North America; that here they might fully enjoy them, and leave them to their last posterity."

Their piety was no less conspicuous than the purity of their doctrines. For their piety, they were respected in Holland. From the Magistrates they received this honorable testimony: "These Englishmen have lived among us, now these twelve years, yet we never had one suit or action come against them." In reference to their intended removal to America, Messrs. Robinson and Brewster declared, in behalf of themselves and their brethren; "We verily believe and trust the Lord is with us; to whom and whose service, we have given ourselves in many trials, and that he will graciously prosper our endeavors, according to the simplicity of our hearts. We are knit together as a body, in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord." Their measures were marked with fervent piety. They kept two days of solemn prayer before they left Leyden. Just as they embarked for England, they commended themselves with most fervent prayer to God. Their expectation was from him. Before they left England, Mr. Robinson, in a letter which he wrote them from Holland, urged them "to repentance for all known sins: and generally for all that were unknown, lest God should swallow them up in his judgments; to live in peace with one another, and all men; not to give or take offence; to have a proper regard for the general good; and avoid, as a deadly plague, all private respect for themselves."

Having escaped the dangers of the ocean, and gained the harbor of Cape Cod, they devoutly, on their knees, gave thanks to the Lord for their safe arrival. Previous to their landing, they entered into solemn contract, as the basis of their government; in which they declared they had undertaken their voyage for the glory of God, and the advancement of the christian faith. As soon as they landed they fell on their knees "with hearty praises to God, who had been their *assurance*, when far off on the sea." In this pious and memorable manner, was the settlement of New England commenced.

The piety of these worthy men was severely tried, by cruel persecution in their native land; by excessive labor and hardship in Holland: by a long and tedious voyage across the boisterous ocean: by being driven upon a shore, which was unknown and inhospitable, at the commencement of a dreary winter,

when they were worn out with toil and sufferings, having neither convenient shelter, nor means of comfortable support, and being soon visited with distressing sickness, which, in a few months swept off nearly half of their number. By means of such trials, their fervent piety became very manifest.

In the noble enterprise of settling this country, large numbers engaged. Many ministers, eminent for piety and ministerial qualifications, came into this land, and were founders and pastors of Churches. Multitudes of pious and peaceable protestants here sought a refuge for their lives and liberties, with freedom for the worship of God. Our fathers considered this country as an asylum for the puritan religion, and aimed to establish Churches as near the scripture standard as possible.

The grand object, for which our ancestors came into this wilderness, was prosecuted with becoming zeal. Much was done to preserve the faith of the Churches in its purity. "In 1637, a Synod met at Cambridge for the suppression of Antinomian and other errors. Eighty errors were presented, examined and condemned. Great was the good which they effected."* In 1648, another Synod, convened at Cambridge, adopted the platform of Church discipline, called "The Cambridge Platform :" and in their result, they say, "This Synod, having perused and considered, with much gladness of heart and thankfulness to God, the confession of faith, lately published by the Reverend Assembly of Divines in England, do judge it holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith, and do, therefore, freely and fully consent thereunto for the substance." This vote was unanimous.** This was republished as "their confession of faith, and as containing the doctrines, constantly taught and professed in the New England Churches." The same confession of faith was again adopted by the Synod of 1680; and the General Court ordered it to be printed "for the benefit of the Churches, in the present and after times." The same doctrines were again publicly declared to be the faith of the Churches, "by a General Convention of Ministers, meeting in Boston, May 28, 1702." This Convention published, "A seasonable testimony to the glorious doctrines of grace ;" from which the Rev. Israel Loring, in his Election Sermon, in 1737, gives the following extract : "That the most high God hath, from all eternity, elected certain persons from among the children of men, to be brought unto eternal happiness, in and by Jesus Christ ; and this decree was not founded in the foresight of any merit or goodness in the chosen, but in the mere good pleasure of God, who made choice of them : that the elected of God are, in his everlasting covenant of redemption, after a peculiar manner, given unto our Lord Messiah, who therein undertook to be their Head and their Redeemer : that the redeemed of the Lord shall be, in his time and way, every one of them infallibly made partakers of effectual vocation, and

have the benefits, which he hath purchased for them, applied to them: that fallen man, having lost the freedom of his will to spiritual good, he will not believe and repent and answer the call of the gospel until a supernatural operation of the Spirit of grace upon him, do change his will; which operation is bestowed in a way of mere sovereign grace upon those only that are ordained unto life: that upon a sinner's accepting that favor of God by faith, God imputes to him the righteousness of that active and passive obedience, with which the Lord Jesus Christ, appearing as the Surety of his people, has fully answered the law of God for them; and the sinner is justified before God, in that righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ: that every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, being by faith united unto him, does henceforth glorify his Lord, in doing the works of evangelical obedience, by a strength derived from him; which good works are the fruit and proof, but not the cause of his justification: and finally, that the saints of God shall persevere in their sanctity, and nothing shall make them fall totally and finally from that grace, wherein they stand, and may *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"

The Churches of Connecticut were regulated by the Cambridge Platform, until 1708; when they unanimously, by their Pastors and Delegates, adopted "The Saybrook Platform," and a confession of faith, containing for substance the same doctrines, with that of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster.

Our ancestors were thus engaged for the purity of doctrine and discipline in the Churches, in order to maintain the power of godliness. For, as the Rev. Israel Loring observed in his Election Sermon, "It was well said by Dr. Owen, that *"gospel truth* is the only root whereon gospel holiness will grow. If any worm corrode, or any other corrupt accident befall it, the fruit will quickly fade and decay. It is impossible to maintain the power of godliness, where the doctrine, from whence it springs, is unknown, corrupted or despised." Our fathers acted in conformity to this sentiment.

Their exertions were happily succeeded. The Spirit was poured out on the people, and the wilderness became a fruitful field. In twenty-seven years from the first plantation, there were forty-three Churches in joint communion with one another; and in twenty-seven years more, there were upwards of eighty Churches, composed of known, pious, and faithful professors. The Rev. Thomas Prince says, "There never was, perhaps, before seen such a body of pious people together on the face of the earth. For those, who came over first, came hither for the sake of religion, and for that pure religion, which was entirely hated by the loose and profane of the world. Their civil and ecclesiastical leaders were exemplary patterns of piety. They encouraged only the virtuous to come with and follow them. They were so strict on the vicious both in the Church and State, that the incorrigible could not endure to live in the country and went back again. Profane swearers and drunkards

were not known in the land." Concerning that period, it was said by an eminent Minister, Rev. Mr. Firmin, in a discourse before the house of Lords and Commons, and the Assembly of divines at Westminster; "I have lived in a country seven years, and all that time, I never heard one profane oath; and all that time, I never did see a man drunk in that land."

When symptoms of declension appeared, our fathers were filled with grief and alarm. Mr. Stoughton, in his Election Sermon, in 1668, says, "Alas! how is New England in danger, this day, to be lost even in New England; to be buried in its own ruins? How sadly may we lament it, that all are not Israel, that are now of Israel? How is the good grain diminished, and the chaff increased? The first generation have been ripened, time after time, and the most of them gathered in as shocks of corn in their season; but we, who rise up to tread the footsteps of those that have gone before us, alas! what are we!—What coolings and abatements are there charged upon us, in the things that are good, and that have been our glory? We have abated in our esteem of ordinances, in our hungering and thirsting after the rich provisions of the house of God. We have abated in our love and zeal, in our wise, tender and faithful management of that great duty of mutual watchfulness and reproof."

Rulers were then so affected with the declining state of religion, that "in 1679, the Massachusetts government called a Synod of all the Churches in that colony to consider and answer these two most important questions: (1) What are the evils that have provoked the Lord, to bring his judgments on New England? (2) What is to be done, that so these evils may be reformed?" "After a day of fasting and prayer," which was observed by the Churches, "the Synod spent several days in discoursing on the two great questions. The result, pointing out the sins of the time, and recommending a reformation, was presented to the General Court; which by an act,—'commended it unto the serious consideration of all the Churches and people in the jurisdiction.' Among their answers to the second question, the Synod advised the several Churches to an express and solemn renewal of covenant with God, and one another: with which many complied; and therefore there was a considerable revival among them." Dr. Cotton Mather says 'Very remarkable was the blessing of God on the Churches, which did not so sleep, as some others; not only by a great advancement of holiness in the people; but also by a great addition of converts to their holy fellowship. Many thousand spectators will testify that they never saw the special presence of the Great God our Saviour more notably discovered, than in the solemnity of these opportunities.'*

In those days, the Ministers, in election sermons and other

* *Christian History for 1743, page 107; and Holmes' Annals.*

discourses, labored to impress it on the minds of the people, that this ought never to be forgotten, that New England was originally a plantation of religion, not of trade ; that pure religion was the cause of God and his people in this country ; and that fervent, vital piety was declining even in those Churches, which were established on purpose to preserve and promote it. In 1702, Dr. Increase Mather thus wrote : "Let the life and power of godliness be revived. That has been the singular glory of New England. The generality of the first planters were men eminent for godliness. We are the posterity of the good old puritan Noncomformists in England, who were a strict and holy people. Such were our fathers who followed the Lord into this wilderness. Time was, when these Churches were beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. What a glorious presence of Christ was there in all his ordinances ? Many were converted, and willingly declared what God had done for their souls ; and there were added to the Churches daily such as should be saved. Look into pulpits ; and see if there is such a glory there, as once there was. New England has had teachers eminent for learning, and no less eminent for holiness and all ministerial accomplishments. When will Boston see a Cotton and a Norton again ? When will New England see a Hooker, a Shepard, a Mitchel, not to mention others ? No little part of the glory was laid in the dust, when these eminent servants of Christ were laid in their graves. Look into our civil state : does Christ reign there as once he did ? How many Churches, how many towns are there in New England, that we may sigh over them and say, *The glory is gone !*"

Thus the settlement of New England was commenced and prosecuted for the advancement of pure religion. For this grand object, our pious ancestors left their native land, and came into a wilderness, inhabited by savages. For this, they labored and toiled ; for this, they fasted and prayed.

From this view of the first settlement and primitive state of New England, we are led to inquire,

Whether we have not departed from the faith and piety of our ancestors ?

Blessed be the Lord, that many are now witnesses for the truth as it is in Jesus ; that many Churches now stand " upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." O that this could be said of all ! But is there not in many of our Churches a great and lamentable departure from the faith and piety of our ancestors ? Alas ! this must be evident to every impartial observer ; and it should be noticed with the deepest humiliation and sorrow of heart.

The faith once delivered to the saints, was exceedingly dear to our ancestors. It formed, under divine influence, their excellent characters. Through belief of the truth, they were sanctified, and prepared for the noble and hazardous enterprise of

crossing the Atlantic, and establishing churches of Christ in a land of savages. Had they been Arminians, Arians, or Socinians, their religious characters would have been essentially different. Had they rejected the capital doctrines of the gospel, would it be too much to say, that their hearts would have been unhumbled, unreconciled to God, and destitute of his love? But they knew, they felt the power of divine truth. They received it in love. They were zealous advocates for the doctrines of grace. These were distinctly held forth as the faith of all the Churches. A departure from this faith was feared as a most deadly evil. It was clearly perceived that, if the doctrines of grace should be exploded, the power of godliness could not be maintained. Hence they manifested fervent zeal against all manner of heresies; against every thing destructive of truth and holiness. Even as lately as in the days of President Edwards, the spread of Arminian sentiments excited much alarm. "The friends of vital piety trembled for fear of the issue."*—But how great is our present departure from the faith of the gospel? How many openly reject its essential doctrines? How many Churches make no explicit declaration of their belief of *the cardinal truths of revelation*? What opposition is made, even in the heart of New England, against the real and proper divinity of the Saviour; his atonement and everlasting righteousness, as the only ground of the sinner's acceptance with God; the personality and work of the Holy Ghost in the salvation of lost men; and against other connected and equally important doctrines? Instead of being valiant for the truth, how many are the zealous advocates of error? Instead of contending earnestly for the faith, they contend for sentiments, which subvert the gospel. How many boast of their liberality and catholicism, while vehemently opposed to the capital articles of the true christian faith? They can bear with almost any thing, except the truth. Hence the outcry against orthodox confessions of faith—How different is all this from the conduct of our worthy ancestors?

A quotation from one of the brightest ornaments of the New England Churches, Dr. Cotton Mather, may serve to shew our sad apostasy. In his "directions for a candidate of the ministry," he says; "I must advise you, that the *doctrines of grace* be all of them always with you, as the very salt and soul of your sermons. Assert always the necessity of turning and living unto God; and yet such an impotency in the wounded and corrupt faculties of man, as renders a supernatural and regenerating work of sovereign grace necessary for it. Shew people how to plead the sacrifice of our Saviour, that they may be forgiven; and how to lay hold on his righteousness, that they may be accepted with God. Shew people how to overcome, and mortify, and crucify their evil appetites by repairing to the cross of our Saviour; and how to derive strength from him for the doing and the bearing

* *Narrative of revival of religion at Northampton.*

of all that they are called unto. Shew the people of God how to take the comfort of their eternal election, and special redemption, and insured perseverance ; and, at the same time, fetch mighty incentives to holiness from those hopes which will forever cause them that have them to purify themselves. Gospelize to them all the commandments of the law, and shew them how to obey upon the principles of the gospel : and how the precepts of the gospel are so many promises of it. With a strong application, study the covenant of grace ; and let the spirit of that covenant animate and regulate all your performances, when you bless the Lord in the congregations. In these truths, there are the articles, which the Church either stands or falls withal. They will be the life of your ministry ; nor can the power of godliness be maintained without them. The loss of these truths will render a ministry insipid and unfruitful ; and procure this complaint about the Shepherds : *The diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away.* — Such were the directions once given and observed in New England. But what essentially different directions are now given ? How many are systematically taught to oppose these all important truths ? How many are told to believe that Christ is the Messiah, while they are kept as ignorant as possible of his true character and of the capital doctrines of his gospel ? The great Apostle to the Gentiles did not teach in this manner. He determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified ; and in execution of his design, he declared *all the counsel of God.* The doctrines of total depravity, regeneration by special grace, election, justification by faith, the final perseverance of the saints, and the eternal deity of the Saviour, he plainly and fully taught. The pious fathers of New England aimed to follow him. But how many now rise up, and either openly or implicitly stigmatize them as bigots ? Alas ! how great is our degeneracy !

Our apostasy further appears from the opposition that is made against revivals of religion, which are produced by the special operations of the Holy Ghost. It is the object of many, at this day, to discredit and reproach such revivals ; and to represent the gracious exercises of real converts as the reveries of deluded fanatics or wild enthusiasts. But in the early days of New England, who ever knew such opposition to the power of godliness ? Then nothing was thought more important or more joyful, than for God to pour out his Spirit, and revive his work in the conversion of sinners. As an example of this, I will recite the words of Mr Roger Clap, a worthy member of the Church in Dorchester. “ Many joined unto the several Churches where they lived, confessing their faith publicly, and shewing before all the assembly their experiences of the workings of God’s Spirit in their hearts, to bring them to Christ.—O the many tears, that have been shed in Dorchester meeting house, at such times, both by those that have declared God’s work on their souls, and also by those that heard them ! In those days, God, even our God,

did bless New England.*—About the year 1740, there was a revival of godliness, which excited great joy in the New England Churches. The Rev. Mr. Foxcroft of Boston wrote thus concerning it: “Let every new conversion we see or hear of, open a fresh spring of joy in our hearts, and fill our mouths with praise. As the number of converts in Zion in this remarkable day of divine power and grace, is on the increasing hand, and *much people are daily added to the Lord* in one place and another, how should all that would approve themselves lovers of Christ and souls, rejoice and give thanks! Praise ye the Lord: praise the Lord, O my soul.—O how should we magnify the Lord with thanksgiving, who is so marvellously, at this day, visiting our land, to *take out of it a people for his name*, and in so extensive a manner *reviving his work* among us. May it spread still more, till the whole land, yea, the whole earth is filled with the glory of the Lord.”†—In 1743, a Convention of about seventy Ministers,‡ in Boston, declared publicly, to the glory of sovereign grace, their full persuasion that there had been a remarkable and happy revival of religion in many parts of this land, through an uncommon divine influence; and they add, “Thus we have declared our thoughts as to the work of God, so remarkably revived in many parts of this land. And now we desire to bow the knee in thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our eyes have seen, and our ears heard such things.” Such joy and gratitude were then expressed. But what opposition now appears to the same work of sovereign grace? How many treat it with open contempt? How many rejoice to hear the doctrines of grace exploded, and revivals of religion reproached as fanaticism and delusion? They wish for teachers, who will speak smooth things, and not alarm them by faithfully declaring their total depravity of heart, and their absolute need of special grace. They wish to live as they list, and still indulge their fond, though delusive, hopes of future happiness. As a natural consequence of this opposition to the truth and to the power of godliness, there has been a great and lamentable change in the morals of New England. Some say that the doctrines of grace tend to licentiousness. But facts contradict the assertion. It is not the truth, but heresy, which tends to licentiousness. The morals of New England have been the purest, when the truth has been most faithfully taught, and most generally received. In proportion as the true doctrines of the gospel have been opposed, and their opposite errors propagated, have vice and immorality abounded.

* *Cited in the Christian history, page 72.*

† *Christian history, page 135.*

‡ Ten of these belonged to Boston. Upwards of forty Ministers who were not present, sent forward their written testimonies to the work of God’s grace. These were published in the *christian history*.

That so many Churches have left the gospel foundation, is another proof of our apostasy. The good old way, which our fathers trod, is forsaken. Churches were not only formed with the greatest care, but our fathers were also very careful and strict in the admission of members. No person was admitted to full communion, who did not give hopeful evidence of being a subject of special, renewing grace. Those who wished for admission, were carefully examined by the minister and some of the brethren. Much pains were taken "to prevent the polluting of the ordinance, by such as walk scandalously, and to prevent men and women from eating and drinking their own condemnation." But how many are now admitted to full communion, without any such examination, and without any evidence that they have been renewed by special grace? When Churches were careful and strict in admitting members, they maintained gospel discipline. But how much is discipline now opposed and neglected? This evinces Churches to be in a state of great declension, if not nigh unto ruin. "When apostasy prevailed in the Asiatic Churches," says Dr. Increase Mather, "there was the original wound. They did not brandish the sword of discipline, which is Christ's own expedient and appointment for the preservation of Churches in purity; yea, this was a fatal neglect, which, by degrees, proved ruinous to those once famous and glorious Churches. The neglect of discipline—brought in corruption of manners; and corruption of manners was, through the just revenging hand of God, attended with corruption of doctrine; and these together provoked the Lord to lay those Churches most desolate." "So it was with the once famous Churches of Bohemia: remissness in their discipline proved their ruin." How much do we discover of the same apostasy, in many of our Churches? In how many, is discipline wholly laid aside? How many members, guilty of heresy or immoral conduct, pass unnoticed and unreproved? How deplorable is the state of such Churches?

Another thing which manifests our declension is the division among professing christians. In the early days of New England, there was a very happy union. "Then" says the Rev. Mr. Shepard of Charlestown, "might be seen magistrates and ministers together in way of advice: ministers and ministers cleaving together in way of communion:—Churches and Churches together in way of consultation, by greater and lesser synods; magistrates and ministers and their people together, uniting hands and hearts in the common cause, breathing a public spirit, and conspiring with holy zeal and vigor, to advance the kingdom of Christ." Of the same period the Rev. James Fitch, of Norwich, in Connecticut, says, "O the uniting glory then manifest;—grace ruling and ordering both rulers and people under the glorious banners of true gospel holy love. Then were colonies united and courts united; magistrates united and ministers united; Churches united and plantations united."

But what a spirit of division now prevails ? And to what is this owing, but to a departure from the truth ? If all who profess religion received in love the same doctrines, the present division would not exist. But the fact is, that while some adhere to the essential doctrines of the gospel, others reject them. They depart from the faith. Hence divisions arise. Many attempts are made to sow discord among real brethren ; and to prevent their uniting to defend and propagate the truth. Heresies are industriously circulated. By means of these, *they who are approved are made manifest* ; those who choose darkness rather than light are also made manifest. Saith the Apostle John, " They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us ; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

The profanation of the Sabbath evinces our apostasy. This holy day was very sacredly observed by our pious ancestors. Legislators, and magistrates, and heads of families were zealously engaged to prevent the profanation of the day. Their authority and example had great and happy influence. But how much is the sabbath now profaned ? How many spend it in journeying, in visiting, in parties of pleasure, in mirth, in rioting and wantonness : *no man forbidding them !* How are the youth suffered to walk about, and from house to house, and profane the day by vain, if not corrupting conversation ? What numbers come to untimely deaths, in the midst of their heaven darning profanation of the sabbath ? How many others, by profaning the day, form habits of wickedness, which bring upon them sure and dreadful destruction ?

Another thing which manifests our sad declension is the neglect of family worship, and the religious education of children. Our fathers adopted this maxim, that " families are the nurseries for the church and commonwealth : rein families and you ruin all." Their houses were *Bethels*, in which God was worshipped every morning and evening. His blessing was humbly sought ; and his goodness gratefully acknowledged. Children were early taught, by *example*, to fear the Lord, and to seek his grace by prayer. But now " the great wound and misery of New England is, that families are out of order." In how many, is prayer wholly neglected ? Some may attend the worship of God, occasionally, or when they think it would be peculiarly disgraceful to omit it. How many think it would be a loss of time, to leave their worldly employments, in order to wait on God for his blessing ? What a spirit of impiety is this ! And do not some heads of families attend prayer, while they deny this privilege to their servants and hired laborers ? They treat these as if they had no God to serve, no souls to save ! How must God regard the prayers of those who love the world more than they love him, or the souls of men ?—How distressing to hear no prayer in a family ! How inconsistent and impious is the conduct of many, who

abound in thanks to their fellow creatures, but give no thanks to their great Creator ? In God they live ; and his goodness is the prime source of all their blessings ; and yet they practically say, *there is no God !*

Children are also greatly neglected. They are not so generally dedicated to God in baptism, as they were in the early days of New England. The learned and godly men, who composed the first Churches in this land, never considered the baptism of the believer's children as a human invention ; but as a divine institution, and of equal authority and importance with the baptism of the believer. Upon this principle, the pure and orthodox Churches of New England were first formed. Pious parents esteemed it a great privilege to dedicate their children to God in baptism. They did it in faith, and with fervent prayer. The children, thus dedicated to God, were considered as being in a peculiar relation to the Church, and under its care and watch. " As for the children of the covenant," said Dr. Increase Mather, " let discipline be extended towards them according as they are subjects capable thereof. Did not our fathers come hither in hope that they should leave their children under the discipline and government of the Lord Jesus in his Church ? Hath not Christ owned the application of solemn, public admonitions, &c. to some of them that have been children of the Church, though not in full communion, so as to convert their souls thereby ? " The Churches were then blessed with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. In fulfilment of his promise, he poured his Spirit on their seed ; and numbers came forward, and subscribed with their own hands to be the Lord's. But, of late years, how lamentable has been the change ? How many who have practised infant baptism, have not duly attended to its import and design, nor faithfully discharged the duties, which it involves ? Children have been consecrated to God, and then left to their own wayward inclination. And what have Churches done to prevent or remove this evil ? Have they been duly attentive to their children, or suitably concerned for their salvation ? — To say, ' We are not agreed about this part of our duty,' is too much evidence of apostasy. This disagreement may arise from our neglect of duty. Had our Churches been faithful, our duty might have been plain. Then their practice, in connexion with the word of God, would have marked out a plain path. But having so much and so long forsaken the good old way, it is difficult finding it.

Our neglect of the children of the Church has had another very bad effect. It has excited strong prejudices against infant baptism. Many have openly denied, and warmly opposed it. But this is a sad departure from the faith and practice of the pious fathers of New England, as well as of the great body of Christ's faithful followers ever since his ascension. Even Churches, that the Lord has peculiarly blessed with his presence and grace, have been reproached and reviled as Churches of anti-

christ : and the children of God's people have been taught to despise the seal of the covenant. The consequence has been, that many of our youth are vain, thoughtless and inattentive to religion. The more infant baptism is denied, and children neglected, the more deplorable their ignorance and stupidity. This lamentable fact has been witnessed in New England.

Catechetical instruction is greatly neglected. In former times, the assembly's catechism was used in all our schools. Much pains were taken to teach the youth this excellent summary of christian faith and practice. The Bible was also universally read in schools. The effects were very happy. Children were early acquainted with the scriptures. A worthy minister has told me that the whole scripture history was familiar to him at the age of seven years. But from this good old way there are sad departures. The Bible and catechism are much laid aside, in educating children, both in schools and families. The effects are very evident and alarming. Many come forward into active life, ignorant of the first principles of the oracles of God. Such persons are easily "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Our conduct, in other respects, testifies that we have departed from the primitive piety of New England. A pious and learned minister of Roxbury, the Rev. Samuel Danforth, in his election sermon, 1670, says, "In our first and best times, the kingdom of heaven broke in upon us with a holy violence, and every man pressed into it. What mighty efficacy and power had the clear and faithful dispensation of the gospel upon your hearts?—How careful were you, even all sorts, young and old, high and low, to take hold of the opportunities of your spiritual good and edification, ordering your secular affairs so as not to interfere with your general calling? How diligent and faithful in preparing your hearts for the reception of the word?—How attentive in hearing the everlasting gospel?—How fervent in prayer to God for his blessing on the seed sown? O what an esteem for Christ's faithful ambassadors in those days? How precious were they in your eyes? counting yourselves happy in the enjoyment of a pious, learned, and orthodox ministry. What ardent desires after communion with Christ in his ordinances? What solicitude to seek the Lord after the right order?—O how your faith grew exceedingly?—O how your love towards each other abounded?" Thus spake this godly man. But what would he now say of New England? Would he not say that the words of his dear fellow laborer, Dr. Increase Mather, were verified? "If such places, where the house of God hath been erected, do once degenerate, they are like to become *Bethavens*, places of the greatest vanity and iniquity in the world.—*Gilgal* was once famous upon religious accounts.—But in after generations, it was a fountain of much wickedness. *All their wickedness was in Gil-*

gal. The devil seeks to corrupt those places especially, which once were famous for religion.—Wittemburg in Germany was the town, where the reformation in Luther's time began ; and therefore the devil did seek to corrupt that place especially, and caused it to become the seat of grievous heresies.” How much is this to be seen in our land ? How great and lamentable is the change in many congregations ? What contempt of the gospel and its institutions is manifested ? What heresies are advanced ? What stupidity prevails ? How dissipated and profligate are many ? How many professors of religion may be found, who are nowise distinguished from the world, by their sobriety, or attention to religious duties ? In short, how much do error and impiety abound in places once famous for evangelical truth and holiness.

It was not love of the world, but the love of God, which brought our ancestors to this land. They sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. But “the interest of New England is now changed from a religious to a worldly interest ; and in this, is our great radical apostasy.” The great object of pursuit is worldly gain. Multitudes have adopted it as their maxim, that *gain is godliness*. Consequently, fraud, deceit, lying, contention, injustice, extortion, and all kinds of base and iniquitous speculation greatly abound. Through love of the world, many trample on divine authority, neglect their souls, reject the great salvation, and pursue the downward road to endless perdition.—How many religious professors love the world and the things of the world ? How little of the favor of godliness is perceived in their conduct and conversation ? Alas ! they seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.

How much do we fail of treading in the steps of our ancestors ? How different is our character from theirs ? What different objects engage our attention ? Alas ! alas ! Where is the primitive glory of New England !

How great is our guilt ! This is increased in proportion to the obligations we have violated. And what people has been more highly favored ; what people has been laid under greater obligations to be holy ? “As for special relation to God ;” says Mr. Stoughton, “whom hath the Lord more signally exalted than his people in this wilderness ? The name, and interest of God, and covenant relation to him, have been written upon us, in capital letters from the beginning.—As for stipulations and engagements back again to God ; what solemn public transactions of this kind have there been among us ? Hath not the eye of the Lord beheld us laying covenant engagements upon ourselves ? Hath not his ear heard us solemnly avouching him and him alone to be our God and Saviour ?—As for our advantages and privileges in a covenant state ; if any people in the world have been lifted up to heaven, as to these, *we* are the people. Name what you will under this head, and we have had it. We have had Moses and Aaron to lead us ; we have had teachings

and instructions ;—we have had ordinances and gospel dispensations the choicest of them ; we have had peace and plenty ; we have had afflictions and chastisements in measure ; we have had the hearts, and prayers, and blessing of the Lord's people every where ; we have had the eye and hand of God watching and working every way for our good ; *our adversaries* have had their rebukes, *we* have had our encouragements and a wall of fire round about us. What more could have been done for us, than has been done ?—And then as to New England's first ways ; glorious things might here be spoken unto the praise of free grace, and to justify the Lord's expectations upon this ground ? Surely God hath spoken concerning his Churches here as in Jeremiah, ii. 2. *I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.* O what were the open professions of the Lord's people that first entered this wilderness ? How did our fathers entertain the gospel, with all the pure institutions thereof, and those liberties, which they brought over ? What was their communion and fellowship in the administration of the kingdom of Jesus Christ ? What was the pitch of their brotherly love, of their zeal for God and his ways, and against ways destructive of truth and holiness ? What was their humility, their mortification, their exemplariness ? How much of holiness to the Lord was written upon all their ways and transactions ? *God sifted a whole nation, that he might send choice grain over into this wilderness.*" Such, my brethren, have been our obligations to be a holy people : and our obligations have been continually increasing, by manifestations of divine goodness. New England has been, in a peculiar sense, the vineyard of the Lord, where he has looked for the fruits of righteousness. But we have yielded the grapes of Sodom. We have brought forth iniquity. To us, the Lord may say, " *Ali, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity ;—children that are corrupters ! they have forsaken the Lord ; they have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger ; they are gone away backward.*" " *Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*—He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

NOW, my Brethren and Friends, what shall be done ? Shall we continue to depart from the faith and piety of our ancestors ? Or shall we make every possible exertion to revive and promote the pure religion of the gospel ?

What can be more laudable than to pursue the design of our ancestors ? Or what can be more criminal than, instead of imitating their love and zeal for truth and holiness, to embrace and advocate error and live in impiety ? Did it not add greatly to the guilt of unbelieving Jews, that Abraham was their father ? Were not the Scribes and Pharisees peculiarly criminal in pretending to venerate the ancient prophets, while they rejected and per-

secuted those who came in the same spirit, and bore witness to the same truths ? And how aggravated must be our condemnation, if we not only refuse to imitate the piety of our ancestors ; but also oppose, with more or less vehemence, the cause which they so zealously promoted ?

Receive in love, I beseech you, the doctrines of grace, which our ancestors held so dear. Can you be ashamed of the capital articles of their faith, unless you are ashamed of the gospel ? And can you be ashamed of the gospel, or of those doctrines, which are its essence and glory, without being ashamed of Christ ? What then would be your doom ? Do you expect to possess the piety of our ancestors, while you reject the essential doctrines of the gospel ? Such an expectation must be vain. Reject these doctrines, and your character must be directly opposite to theirs. Reject these doctrines, and how absurd to pretend that you believe the gospel ? What, pretend to believe the gospel, and yet reject its essential doctrines ! This was not the manner of our pious ancestors ; nor would they acknowledge any to be their children who should manifest such absurdity in their conduct. Repent, my friends, and believe the gospel. Receive its doctrines in love, and they will purify the heart, and produce the fruits of righteousness. Let them dwell richly in you, and you will not deserve the name of bigots or fanatics : for you will be able to give a reason of your belief and hope, and to commend yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Would you be guilty of murder, or theft, or perjury ? And will you profane the sabbath ? What can be a more open contempt of the authority of God, or of the blessings of his grace ? What can be more provoking to him, or destructive to you ? Can you indulge a hope of salvation, while you profane the precious memorial of the Saviour's resurrection ?

Daily unite, I beseech you, in the worship of God. How can you neglect this duty or despise this privilege ? Do you not need the blessing of God ? Ought you not to acknowledge his goodness ? If you live without prayer, will your families differ from the heathen ? yes, they will differ by *being stained with greater guilt.* What will it avail you to excel the heathen in knowledge, and refinement, while, by restraining prayer before God, you become more deserving of his wrath ?

Look on your dear children. Realize their frailty, and the worth of their souls. Are not these dying immortals placed peculiarly under *your* care ? Is not their instruction committed to *you* ? Does not God command you to *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* ? And what if they perish through your neglect ? How then could you meet them in the presence of your Judge ?

Christian brethren : what exertions are required, at this day, in the cause of truth and holiness ? Behold the prevailing here-

fies and impiety, and can you be inactive? How would your pious ancestors feel; how would they conduct? Would they indulge a slothful habit? Would they shrink from any labor, or sufferings in defence of the truth? Imbibe their spirit, and you will contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and decidedly oppose every sentiment, which exalts sinful man, and degrades the adorable Saviour to a mere creature.

Strive, dear Brethren, to promote the power of godliness. Be not ashamed to advocate revivals of religion, which are caused by the Spirit of God, in connexion with his word: nor be moved at the conduct of those who call such revivals, fanaticism and delusion, except to be moved with pity and concern for their souls.* Pray, fervently and constantly, that God would pour out his Spirit, and revive his work, with mighty power. Be deeply sensible, that, without the special grace of God, our Churches will come to nothing, or worse than nothing; formality and impiety will overspread our congregations, and sinners rush on to destruction. Can you be unaffected with such scenes? Can you see vice and impiety abound, and souls perish forever, and yet make no exertions to promote pure religion?

Esteem very highly the institutions of the gospel. Be deeply grieved at the profanation of the sabbath; and exert all your influence and authority to prevent it. Imitate the example of Nehemiah, who boldly said to sabbath-breakers, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Let your whole conduct testify your reverence for the day. Let it never

* *No doubt, there is much fanaticism and delusion at the present day. For Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, that he may deceive the more successfully. When God revives his work, Satan attempts to imitate it; as the magicians attempted to imitate the miracles wrought by Moses. A genuine revival of religion is distinguished from all counterfeits by its conformity to divine truth. The author is happy to avail himself of the testimony of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, on this subject. In their narrative of the state of religion, published at their late session, they expressly declare that they "cannot recognize as genuine any work in the hearts of men, bearing the name of religion, but that which is produced by the instrumentality of truth, acknowledges and honors that truth."—In those parts of the Church, without exception, in which vital religion has flourished, in the course of the last year, the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; viz. the total depravity of human nature, the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, justification by his imputed righteousness, the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, and the special influences of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration and sanctification of sinners, have been decidedly received and honored."—Try men by the doctrines of the gospel, if you would know whether their religious exercises are genuine.*

be said that christian professors profane the day by vain and worldly conversation, or any unsuitable conduct. But *call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honorable; and honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.*

With fervent love and lively joy, commemorate the death of Christ; and highly prize the ordinance of baptism. Esteem it a precious privilege, to enter into covenant with God in Christ; and then to devote to him your beloved children. Dear Brethren, let it no longer be thought, that the consecration of children to God in baptism is a vain thing. But shew its importance by faithfully discharging your duty to your children. In this way, convince the opposers of infant baptism of their error. Have you not, too long and too justly, been charged with neglecting the religious education of your children, after dedicating them to God in baptism? Shall this charge still lie against you? O be faithful to your children. Never forget their consecration to God; but let it quicken you in every parental duty. Frequently remind them of their baptism, and urge it, as a motive, why they should consent to be the Lord's. Do with all your might, what you find to do for their salvation. How solemn is your charge! how great, your responsibility!

Feel the vast importance of catechising children. By diligence in this mode of instruction, the Waldenses successfully promoted the knowledge of the Scriptures. "When certain Jesuits were sent among them, to entice them from the truth to idolatry, they returned amazed, professing that children of seven years old, among the Waldenses, knew more in the Scriptures and of the mysteries of the gospel, than many of their doctors did." Exert yourselves, my Brethren, to revive this mode of instruction, both in families and schools. What better method can be pursued, to make our children acquainted with the scriptures.* Be zealous and persevering in this business. Excite and encourage youth and children to attend to the Bible and Catechism. Shew them the great importance of religious instruction. Let them see that their parents and instructors are deeply concerned for their welfare. Let them feel that you desire and fervently pray for the salvation of their souls.

Let this subject deeply engage the attention of Churches. Has not every Church of Christ important duties to discharge towards their children? Are christian brethren, in covenant relation with each other, to express no concern for each other's children? Does the promise of God to pour his Spirit on the children of the Church, impose on them no obligation to see whether their children are partakers of this grace? Can a

* For this purpose I would particularly recommend "THE EVANGELICAL PRIMER; BY THE REV. JOSEPH EMERSON of BEVERLY."—It is very desirable, that this may be used in every family, and in every school.

Church unite in dedicating their children to God in baptism, that they may be his, and yet have nothing more to do for them? What a prostitution this would be of their baptism? What a neglect, not to say contempt, of the promise? And how opposite to all the dictates of that love, which seeketh not her own? Let the subject, my Brethren, be well considered. Let the Church and their children come together for prayer and religious conference: let all the members be fervent in love to each other and to the children; exercise a lively faith in the promise; and realize covenant engagements; and would nothing be done for the salvation of the children? Would no instructions, no exhortations, no admonitions be given them? It has been practised in New England, for a Church to set apart days, to beseech the Lord to pour his Spirit on their children. Ought not the practice to be revived?*

Let our Churches be strict in the admission of members; and united in reviving gospel discipline. What can be more conducive to their purity, peace, and prosperity. Let persons be admitted without a faithful examination, and discipline neglected, and our Churches will be corrupted and ruined. Be faithful, beloved Brethren, in these two important concerns. Be faithful to each other, in mutual watchfulness and reproof. *Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Let the friends of evangelical truth be more united, and act more in concert. Let there be more pious, prayerful consultations for the advancement of Christ's cause. Beware of the adversary, whose policy it is to excite jealousy and sow discord among brethren. He dreads their united influence. Being agreed in the essentials of christianity, never let a difference of opinion on minor subjects divide you. Love one another, with a pure heart fervently; and *be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

Vigorously pursue every lawful method to advance the cause of truth. The glory of God; the honor of the Redeemer; the salvation of immortal souls; and your own highest blessedness, require it. Let no difficulties, no opposition, no trials move you from the path of duty. Be steadfast in the faith. When others forsake the cause they once espoused; or boldly advance and warmly advocate opinions, subversive of the gospel; let your attachment to the truth, be more ardent and vigorous. Let it prompt you to greater exertions. Declare the whole counsel of God, as duty shall require. Never listen to the infi-

* *The General Assembly, in their narrative, referred to in a preceding note, say. "The means, in addition to the preaching of the word, which God has owned and blessed, are, catechising and prayer meetings. And the Assembly hail it as an auspicious omen, that, upon many of his people and Churches, God has poured out a Spirit of grace and supplication."*

del sentiment, that if a man's life be regular, it is no matter what he believes. But remember that men can never be sanctified and saved, except through *the truth*. To attempt their conversion, while the doctrines of grace are concealed or denied, is beating the air. In defence of these doctrines, unite zeal and meekness, resolution and prayer.

Be excited to greater zeal by the laudable exertions of others. Behold the friends of Jesus uniting in the same grand design. See what noble efforts are made. Consider what has been done, within a few years, to advance the cause of truth. Engage in this cause, with all your hearts ; for it will prosper ; it will rise triumphant, above all opposition. It is the cause of Jehovah. With growing zeal, employ your time, your talents, and all you have, in the work of the Lord. Animated with the spirit of martyrs, go forward boldly in his service. Confide in the grace and power of Jehovah—Jesus. His grace is sufficient for you. His power will uphold and defend you, till your warfare is accomplished ; and then crown you with eternal glory. *Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak ; for your work shall be rewarded.*—AMEN.





